



Setti D. Warren  
Mayor

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**Newton Housing Partnership**

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Candace Havens  
Director

July 7, 2011

Mayor Setti D. Warren  
1000 Commonwealth Avenue  
Newton, MA 02459

**Re: FY 2011 Newton Housing Partnership Annual Report**

Dear Mayor Warren,

As called for in the Newton Housing Partnership's "Statement of Mission and Organizational Structure," the following is a summary of the Partnership's efforts during fiscal year 2011. In FY11, the Partnership reviewed proposals consisting of a total of 120 housing units, 31 of which would be considered affordable by local, State and/or federal laws, assisted in further developing and refining affordable housing programs and policies, and participated in advocacy efforts to support the Community Development Block Grant Program.

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT REVIEWS:**

- **Parkview Homes** at 192 Lexington Street consists of 10 units, all affordable. This year it continued to involve the Partnership's attention, in particular with regard to implementation of the specific accessibility requirements successfully advocated by the Partnership during FY2010. That importantly included that one of the units in the development was to be fully accessible (MAAB Group 2), although this feature was not required by any law or regulation. No project applicants qualified for the features of such a unit, which raised observations regarding necessary outreach to potential applicants, and underscored observations that accessibility demands apparently differ between households seeking ownership units (which these are) and those seeking rental ones.
- **The Chestnut Hill Square** development proposal, which is subject to Newton's Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance and therefore requires an affordable housing component, was discussed by the Partnership over a five-year period. In September 2010, the Partnership sent its review letter concerning the proposed residential component of the proposal to the Board of Aldermen's Land Use Committee, indicating neither support nor opposition to the proposal. In that letter and testimony at the public hearing we indicated strong support for mixed use at that site, and the appropriateness of the range of the number of housing units suggested. However, we expressed disappointment over the scant information regarding the affordable

housing, and the lack of assurance regarding when the housing element of the project would actually be developed, who the developer would be, how many units, if any, would be built, and what levels of affordability would be provided.

- The **61 Pearl Street** project proposal will provide three two-bedroom rental housing units to be permanently affordable for low-income households. Although not required by law, the first-floor unit will be made fully accessible. In its exchanges with the applicant, the Partnership suggested and the applicant incorporated changes and clarifications regarding various financial aspects of the development. The Partnership then wrote letters of project support to both the Planning and Development Board and the Community Preservation Committee for their consideration in December, 2010, and upon request of the CPC, provided expert testimony during the considerations of the Board of Aldermen's Community Preservation and Finance Committees.
- **112-116 Dedham Street** is proposed as 16 units of ownership housing in an elevator-served building. All units are single-floor, four of which will be permanently affordable to households earning up to 80 percent of the area-wide median income. Three of the units are proposed to meet MAAB Group 2 accessibility requirements and all others to meet Group 1 accessibility standards. The Partnership wrote a letter of project support to the Community Preservation Committee for its consideration in January, 2011. While indicating preference for this proposal over the possible alternative of a taller 20-unit building that would not require public subsidy, the Partnership did recommend against use of CPC housing funds for preserving the existing barn, and suggested that a "profit-sharing" formula be applied under which a share of any profits over a stipulated level would be returned to the City.

#### **PROGRAMS AND POLICIES:**

- Changes proposed for the **Newton Rehabilitation Program** were reviewed and approved, limiting per-project funding amounts in order to serve more residents and prioritizing assistance to emergency cases where health and safety of residents will be adversely impacted if the issue is not addressed in a timely manner. The Newton Rehabilitation Program is funded with federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. (June, 2010)
- **FY12 Annual Action Plan:** Provided feedback on the Plan which is submitted annually to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development by the Housing and Community Development Division of the Planning Department. The Plan includes such priorities as increasing affordable housing options with supportive services for low-and moderate-income individuals with special needs and homeless veterans, increasing the number of accessible rental and ownership units for the elderly and persons with disabilities, and supporting deeper subsidies in affordable housing developments so that very-low income renter households have a greater range of housing choices. (September, 2010)

- **Project Review Material:** Clarified the type of information and materials required and the timing of providing such materials needed by the Newton Housing Partnership in order to review proposed affordable housing projects. When determining its level of support for an affordable housing development proposal, the Partnership reviews projects based on five criteria: (1) affordability, (2) feasibility, (3) suitability, (4) livability, and (5) sustainability. With experience, further modifications and clarifications can be expected (August, 2010).

#### OTHER EFFORTS:

- **Increased the number of Partnership members from 8 to 17.** The Partnership has strongly added to its capacity and diversity, now representing the following affiliations: architecture, law, lending, business, housing and real estate development, property management, housing and planning consulting, social and human services, capital planning and construction management, clergy, and nonprofit housing advocacy.
- **Begun reconsideration of Partnership organization and efforts.** Led by a new *ad hoc committee* and reflecting new membership and new leadership, the Partnership has begun discussions around mission, organization, and salient undertakings for the forthcoming years.
- **Sent letters in support** of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program to Senators Scott Brown (MA), John Kerry (MA) and Daniel Inouye (Chair of Senate Appropriations Committee) and to voice our opposition to any threatened cuts or elimination to this program in FY11 or FY12.

Attached is a tabulation of data regarding the housing mix reviewed during the year by the Partnership. The entries regarding whether or not proposals exceed requirements regarding green or access or affordability were solely as judged by the Partnership regarding the housing units, based on its understanding at the time of review. Note that all four of the proposals received all of the approvals that were required: the percentages shown under "Local approvals required" refer to applicability of approvals by the ZBA, BOA, or Mayor and P & D Board, not to success of projects in actually gaining approval. If I can provide you with any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at (617) 969 – 1805 or 969-5367.

Sincerely,



Philip B. Herr  
Immediate Past Chair, Newton Housing Partnership

Cc      Newton Board of Aldermen  
         Community Preservation Committee  
         Newton Housing Authority, Executive Director  
         Newton Housing Partnership

# HOUSING DEVELOPMENT INVOLVING THE NEWTON HOUSING PARTNERSHIP FY 2011

Developments Reviewed	Housing units		Exceed basic requirements			Discretionary local approvals				
	Total	Afford	Green	Access	Afford	ZBA/40B Comp Permit	Mayor & P & D Board funding	Board of Aldermen		
								Special Permit	CPA	Amend Z map
Parkview Homes	10	10	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	Y	-
Chestnut Hill Square	91	14	Y	N	N	-	-	Y	-	Y
61 Pearl Street	3	3	Y	Y	Y	-	Y	-	Y	-
112-116 Dedham Street	16	4	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	Y	-
Total # housing units	120	31								
Total # of Projects "Yes"			4	3	3	2	3	1	3	1
Total # of Units in "Yes" projects			120	29	29	26	29	90	19	91
Total # of Affordable Units in "Yes" projects			31	17	17	14	17	14	7	14
Total % of Projects "Yes"			100%	75%	75%	50%	75%	25%	75%	25%
Total % of Units in "Yes" projects			100%	24%	24%	22%	24%	76%	16%	76%
Total % of Affordable Units in "Yes" projects			100%	55%	55%	45%	55%	45%	23%	45%

SEE DEFINITIONS NEXT PAGE

## **DEFINITIONS**

“Exceeds requirements” indicates a substantial effort to go beyond what is required under local, State or federal law, as evidenced in submittals to the Newton Housing Partnership. For mixed use developments this evaluation is based solely on the project’s residential aspects.

“Green” relates to energy, water consumption, or other aspects of sustainability. In the case of projects requiring a special permit “Y” indicates having gone beyond the minimum that likely is needed to satisfy the requirement of the “green” decision criterion at Zoning Section 30-24(d)(5).

“Access” relates to unit and/or site features that go beyond the minimum requirements of federal, State and local architectural accessibility rules.

“Afford” relates to providing housing assured to remain affordable to households and individuals at below-market rates beyond the minimum requirements of federal, State and local rules.

“Discretionary local approvals” relate to regulatory approvals (ZBA/40B and BOA /Special Permits & Zoning map) and funding approvals relied upon and managed by the City (BOA after Community Preservation Committee or the Mayor following review by the Planning & Development Board).